

## Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

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R 150355Z DEC 73

FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9800

INFO AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

CINCPAC

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 SINGAPORE 4830

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: 0\*94, ENRG, SN

SUBJECT: IMPLICATIONS OF ARAB OIL SQUEEZE ON SINGAPORE

1. SUMMARY: IN EFFORT TO AVOID ARAB OIL EMBARGO, GOS HAS SHIFTED ITS FOREIGN POLICY ON ARAB/ISRAELI ISSUES, AND FOLLOWING IMPOSITION ARAB EMBARGO ON U.S., TOOK ACTIONS ON OIL AFFECTING US SECURITY INTERESTS IN REGION. AS A CONSEQUENCE, DFSC CONTRACTS FOR INDO-CHINA AND THAILAND ARE NO LONGER BEING HONORED, US NAVAL VESSELS CAN NO LONGER BUNKER AT SINGAPORE FACILITIES AND, WITH CERTAIN EXCEPTIONS, US MILITARY AIRCRAFT CAN NO LONGER REFUEL IN SINGAPORE. HOWEVER, GOS HAS BEEN HELPFUL IN ACQUIESCING IN REFUELING OF US NAVY SHIP AT BRITISH BUNKER. THESE CHANGES IN POLICY CAN BE ATTRIBUTED TO SINGAPORE'S HEAVY DEPENDENCE ON ARAB OIL AND ITS DESIRE NOT TO OFFEND ITS MUSLIM NEIGHBORS.

2. FOR TIME BEING EMBASSY BELIEVES GOS WILL CONFINE ITSELF TO ACTIONS AND POSITIONS TAKEN TO DATE AND WILL

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NOT MOVE TO EXPEL ISRAELI MILITARY ADVISORS OR BREAK RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL. HOWEVER, IF GOS CONCLUDES MIDDLE EAST PEACE EFFORTS ARE GETTING NOWHERE AND THAT OIL SQUEEZE WILL PROGRESSIVELY TIGHTEN, WE SHOULD

ASSUME GOS WILL TAKE FURTHER STEPS TO MOLLIFY ARABS AT EXPENSE US INTERESTS. ALTHOUGH PM LEE IS CURRENTLY WELL DISPOSED TOWARD US, WE SHOULD RECOGNIZE THAT IF HE FEELS SINGAPORE IS THREATENED HE CAN REACT UNPREDICTABLY AND PRECIPITOUSLY AS HE HAS DURING TIMES OF CRISIS IN THE PAST. SUCH A REACTION COULD TAKE AN ANTI-US DIRECTION -- ESPECIALLY IF OIL CRISIS DEEPENED AND/OR SITUATION IN INDO-CHINA DETERIORATED SERIOUSLY AND LEE CONCLUDED US WAS NOT CAPABLE OF DEALING WITH THESE CRISES. BELIEVE BEST WAY OF REDUCING POSSIBILITY OF ABRUPT GOS TURNABOUT IS FOR US TO TAKE LEE MORE INTO OUR CONFIDENCE BY PROVIDING HIM OUR ASSESSMENT OF MIDDLE EAST AND THE INDO-CHINA SITUATIONS AND OUR GENERAL STRATEGY FOR DEALING WITH THESE PROBLEMS. BELIEVE LETTER FROM SECRETARY ALONG THESE LINES WOULD BE MOST USEFUL IN INITIATING DIALOGUE AND HAVE STEADYING EFFECT. END SUMMARY.

3. DURING PAST MONTH GOS HAS SHIFTED ITS FOREIGN POLICY ON ARAB/ISRAELI ISSUES IN EFFORT TO AVOID ARAB EMBARGO ON OIL DELIVERIES, AND FOLLOWING IMPOSITION ARAB EMBARGO ON U.S., HAS TAKEN ACTIONS WHICH HAVE HAD SOME ADVERSE EFFECT ON U.S. SECURITY INTERESTS IN THE REGION. FOLLOWING RECEIPT OF INFORMATION FROM SINGAPORE ESSO REP THAT EXXON INTENDED TO RESPECT ARAB EMBARGO AGAINST U.S., GOS SENT SECRET INSTRUCTIONS TO ALL OIL REFINERIES IN SINGAPORE REQUESTING THAT THEY NOT EXPORT OR RE-EXPORT OIL SUPPLIES TO ARAB-EMBARGOED COUNTRIES. THIS INSTRUCTION WAS SENT WITHOUT INFORMING OR CONSULTING USG. PRESUMABLY, GOS FELT IT HAD TO GO ALONG WITH ARAB EMBARGO AND DECIDED TO CURRY FAVOR OF ARAB GOVERNMENTS BY MAKING IT CLEAR THAT IT WAS GOS OFFICIAL POLICY THAT SINGAPORE OIL REFINERIES TERMINATE DELIVERIES TO ARAB-EMBARGOED DESTINATIONS.

4. EFFECT OF THIS INSTRUCTION WAS CESSATION OF BUNKERING OF US NAVAL VESSELS AT SINGAPORE FACILITIES  
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AND, EVEN MORE IMPORTANT, FAILURE HONOR DEFENSE FUEL SUPPLY CENTER CONTRACTS FOR VIETNAM, THAILAND, AND CAMBODIA. IN ADDITION, GOS MADE IT CLEAR LAST WEEK THAT EMBARGO INCLUDED SUPPLY OF AVIATION GASOLINE FOR TRANSITING US MILITARY AIRCRAFT TAKEN FLIGHTS FOR LOCKHEED AIR SERVICES IN SINGAPORE (LASS). GOS, HOWEVER, HAS BEEN HELPFUL IN TACITLY ACQUIESCING IN RE-FUELING OF US NAVAL VESSELS AT BRITISH BUNKERS AT SEMBAWANG AND IN NOT OBJECTING TO DIRECT SALES TO VIETNAM AND CAMBODIA.

5. THE GOS, WHICH PREVIOUSLY HAD TAKEN NARROW TIGHT-ROPE ON MID-EAST ISSUES, MOVED QUICKLY TO SHIFT ITS

POLICY. FIRST HINT OF SHIFT WAS A WARM RESPONSE BY PRIME MINISTER LEE TO ALGERIAN PRESIDENT BOUMEDIENNE'S REQUEST OF OCTOBER 22 TO ALL NON-ALIGNED GOVERNMENTS FOR SUPPORT OF ARAB CAUSE. THIS WAS FOLLOWED BY GOS DECISION TO GO ALONG WITH ITS ASEAN PARTNERS IN A STATEMENT CONDEMNING ISRAEL'S FORCIBLE OCCUPATION OF ARAB TERRITORIES AND URGING THAT LAWFUL RIGHTS OF PALESTINIAN PEOPLE BE FULLY RESPECTED AND RESTORED. ALTHOUGH MFA PERMANENT SECRETARY BOGAARS HAD INITIALLY ADVISED EMBASSY THAT GOS DID NOT FAVOR ASEAN INJECTING ITSELF INTO SUCH POLITICAL ISSUES AND HAD MOVED TO SIDETRACK PROPOSAL, SINGAPORE WAS OBVIOUSLY NOT WILLING TO BE ODD MAN OUT WHEN INDONESIA, MALAYSIA AND THE PHILIPPINES INDICATED THAT THEY WERE PREPARED TO GO ALONG WITH TOUGHLY WORDED ASEAN STATEMENT.

6. THIS SHIFT IN POLICY AND GOS ACTIONS WITH REGARD TO OIL CAN BE ATTRIBUTED LARGELY TO TWO MAJOR FACTORS -- SINGAPORE'S DEPENDENCE ON ARAB OIL AND CONSEQUENT FEAR OF A TOTAL ARAB EMBARGO AND GOS DESIRE NOT TO BE SERIOUSLY OUT OF STEP WITH ITS MUSLIM NEIGHBORS.

7. IN 1972 68 PERCENT OF SINGAPORE'S IMPORTS OF CRUDE CAME FROM ARAB COUNTRIES (MOSTLY KUWAIT AND SAUDI ARABIA) WITH REMAINDER IMPORTED FROM IRAN (19 PERCENT) AND BRUNEI-MALAYSIA (13 PERCENT). ALTHOUGH SINGAPORE REQUIRES ONLY AVERAGE OF 34,000 BARRELS OF OIL DAILY FOR INTERNAL USE AND 56,000 BARRELS R BUCPERCAAMJ IZYCOUIRTAS HEAPA IMPOBSSF CRUDE

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TO OPERATE ITS RAPIDLY EXPANDING REFINING INDUSTRY AND SUPPLY ITS REGIONAL NEIGHBORS WITH REFINED PRODUCTS. IN 1972 75 PERCENT OF SINGAPORE'S POL PRODUCTION WAS EXPORTED. THIS AMOUNTED TO 139 VNGBCON BARRELS OF REFINED PETROLEUM VALUED AT S\$1,160 MILLION OR 19 PERCENT OF TOTAL EXPORT INCOME. SINGAPORE'S OIL REFINING CAPACITY HAS GROWN RAPIDLY AND NOW TOTALS 880,00 B/D. BY 1975 IT SHOULD EXCEED ONE MILLION B/D WHICH WOULD MAKE SINGAPORE WORLD'S LARGEST REFINERY CENTER AFTER HOUSTON. TOTAL INVESTMENT IN THE OIL REFINING INDUSTRY IS ESTIMATED TO BE ABOUT \$1,500 MILLION, LDICH INCLUDES MORE THAN HALF OF TOTAL FOREIGN INVESTMENT IN THE REPUBLIC.

8. ALTHOUGH PETROLEUM MANUFACTURING IN SINGAPORE EMPLOY ONLY 2,650 PERSONS, PROLONGED SHORTAGE OF ARAB OIL, OR, EVEN WORSE, A TOTAL ARAB EMBARGO WOULD HAVE A SERIOUS IMPACT ON SINGAPORE'S FOREIGN EXCHANGE EARNINGS AND ITS ENTIRE ECONOMIC POSITION. FURTHERMORE, INDUSTRY HERE CAN EXPECT KEENER COMPETITION FOR SHIPPING, SHIPMENT DELAYS, SHORTAGES OF KEY COMPONENTS/MATERIALS FOR PRODUCTION, AND ATTENDANT DISLOCATIONS OF INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTION. GOS LEADERS APPEAR TO BE EVEN MORE APPREHENSIVE THAT A PROLONGED

ARAB OIL SQUEEZE WILL PRECIPITATE WORLD WIDE RECESSION  
WHICH COULD CAUSE EXTENSIVE ECONOMIC DISLOCATION,  
A REDUCED INFLOW OF FOREIGN INVESTMENT AND A HIGH RATE OF UNEM-  
PLOYMENT WHCH COULD HAVE OVER TIME DOMESTIC POLITICAL  
REPERCUSSIONS. ON THE OTHER HAND, SINGAPORE, AS THE BASE FOR  
OIL EXPLORATION IN SEA, MAY BENEFIT FROM INTENSIFIED SEARCH  
FOR OIL IN THE REGION

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SS-20 RSC-01 L-03 H-03 PRS-01 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00

DODE-00 EB-11 COME-00 TRSE-00 OMB-01 SCEM-02 INT-08

DRC-01 EUR-25 /155 W

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R 150355Z DEC 73

FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9801

INFO AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

CINCPAC

S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 SINGAPORE 4830/2

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

9. GOS DESIRE NOT TO GET TOO FAR OUT OF STEP WITH  
INDONESIA AND MALAYSIA ON ARAB/ISRAELI ISSUES IS IN  
PART DUE TO ITS PRUDENT RECOGNITION THAT SINGAPORE  
SHOULD AVOID OFFENDING THE PRO-ARAB SENTIMENTS OF ITS  
MUSLIM NEIGHBORS. ALTHOUGH GOS IS AWARE THAT INDONESIAN  
OIL IS NOW FULLY COMMITTED, PRIME MINISTER LEE BELIEVES  
THAT SINCE ARABS HAVE FOUND THAT OIL IS A POTENT POLI-  
TICAL WEAPON, THEY WILL BE TEMPTED TO USE THIS CUDGEL  
AGAIN. SINGAPORE OBVIOUSLY HOPES TO KEEP ON GOOD  
TERMS WITH BOTH INDONESIA AND MALAYSIA SO THAT AS  
THEIR PRODUCTION EXPANDS, THEY WILL HAVE NO POLITICAL  
INHIBITIONS ABOUT SHARING THEIR OIL WITH THEIR ASEAN  
PARTNERS AND USING SINGAPORE'S UNDER-UTILIZED REFINING  
CAPACITY.

10. FOR TIME BEING EMBASSY BELIEVES GOS WILL CONFINE  
ITSELF TO ACTIONS AND POSITIONS TAKEN TO DATE AND WILL  
NOT MOVE TO EXPEL ISRAELI MILITARY ADVISORS OR  
BREAK RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL. (ALTHOUGH UAR CHARGE IN

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SINGAPORE PRESSURED GOS TO SUPPORT ASEAN STATEMENT AND CUT OFF POL SUPPLY TO US MILITARY AIRCRAFT, EMBASSY HAS NOT YET RECEIVED ANY FIRM INFORMATION THAT HE HAS URGED GOS TO TAKE DIRECT ACTION AGAINST ISRAELI PRESENCE.) HOWEVER, WE SHOULD EXPECT THAT HENCEFORTH GOS WILL SUPPORT AT LEAST A MODERATELY PRO-ARAB POSITION AND SEEK TO AVOID BACKING ANY US-SPONSORED PROPOSALS ON THE ARAB/ISRAELI CONFLICT UNLESS THEY HAVE THE SUPPORT OF A NUMBER OF MODERATE MUSLIM COUNTRIES, INCLUDING ESPECIALLY INDONESIA AND MALAYSIA. AT SAME TIME, GOS WOULD PROBABLY ABSTAIN ON ANY UN RESOLUTIONS REFLECTING AN EXTREME ANTI-ISRAEL POSITION.

11. QUESTION REMAINS HOW LONG SINGAPORE WILL FEEL ABLE TO HOLD TO ITS PRESENT POSITION. SINCE SINGAPORE'S DOMESTIC OIL REQUIREMENTS ARE RELATIVELY SMALL, IT COULD ABSORB WITHOUT SEVERE INJURY FOR SEVERAL MONTHS SUCCESSIVE 5 PERCENT CUTS BEING APPLIED BY ARAB BLOC TO COUNTRIES ON NEUTRAL LIST. HOWEVER, IF GOS COMES TO CONCLUSION THAT MIDDLE EAST PEACE EFFORTS ARE UNLIKELY TO BE PRODUCTIVE AND THAT ARAB OIL SQUEEZE WILL CONTINUE TO TIGHTEN AND BE SUSTAINED OVER LONG PERIOD OF TIME, WE SHOULD ASSUME THAT GOS WOULD SERIOUSLY CONSIDER TAKING FURTHER STEPS TO APPEASE THE ARABE IN AN EFFORT TO INSURE A LARGE SUPPLY OF OIL.

12. IN SUCH AN EVENTUALITY ONE LIKELY GESTURE WOULD BE TO INFORM ARABS THAT THE ISRAELI MILITARY ADVISORS WOULD BE SENT HOME. SINCE ISRAELI MILITARY MISSION HAS GRADUALLY BEEN REDUCED FROM ABOUT 40 TO 12, THIS COULD BE HANDLED LOCALLY WITH LITTLE EMBARRASSMENT BY ANNOUNCEMENT THAT ADVISORS HAD COMPLETED THEIR MISSION AND WERE BEING PHASED OUT. (ACTUALLY WE UNDERSTAND GOS HAS FOR SOME TIME HAD DOUBTS ABOUT THE CONTINUED UTILITY OF THE ISRAELI MILITARY ADVISORS AND MIGHT HAVE DECIDED IN ANY EVENT TO PHASE THEM OUT.) IN THE EMBASSY'S JUDGEMENT THE FINAL STEP OF BREAKING RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL WOULD ONLY BE TAKEN IF THE GOS FELT FORCED TO THE WALL BY A COMBINATION OF AN ARAB THREAT TO IMPOSE A TOTAL EMBARGO ON OIL AND STRONG PRESSURE FROM MALAYSIA AND INDONESIA (WHICH WE THINK UNLIKELY).

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13. IN TERMS OF IMMEDIATE US INTERESTS GOS WILL CONTINUE TO REQUIRE THAT LOCAL REFINERIES REFUSE OIL TO ALL ARAB-EMBARGOED DESTINATIONS AND THEREFORE DFSC CONTRACTS WILL NOT BE HONORED. HOWEVER, IT IS CLEAR FROM PRIME MINISTER'S REMARKS TO GOVERNOR RAEGAN THAT

GOS IF PREPARED TO WINK AT CONTINUED USE OF BRITISH BUNKERS AT SEMBAWANG BY US NAVY SHIPS, AND THAT HE RECOGNIZES SINGAPORE HAS SOME OBLIGATION TO SUPPLY POL PRODUCTS TO SOUTHEAST ASIAN NEIGHBORS. THEREFORE, IF EITHER INDONESIA, BRUNEI, MALAYSIA OR IRAN OR SOME ARAB STATE CAN BE INDUCED TO PROVIDE ADDITIONAL CRUDE FOR VIETNAM, CAMBODIA, AND THAILAND, GOS WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY BE WILLING TO ALLOW THIS OIL TO BE REFINED IN SINGAPORE. HOWEVER, BELIEVE GOS IS ONLY WILLING TO BE HELPFUL IN MEETING OUR INTERESTS AS LONG AS ITS ACTIONS DO NOT COME TO ATTENTION OF ARAB GOVERNMENTS, OR IF THEY DO, THAT THEY CAN BE PLAUSIBLY DEFENDED AS ACTIONS WHICH ARE NOT COVERED BY ARAB EMBARGO.

14. IT IS QUITE EVIDENT FROM LEE'S RECENT CONVERSATIONS WITH BOTH THE AMBASSADOR AND GOVERNOR REAGAN THAT HE IS DEEPLY TROUBLED BY THE MIDDLE EAST SITUATION AND ARAB OIL RESTRICTIONS. HE IS ALSO EXTREMELY CONCERNED OVER THE IMPACT OF US DOMESTIC POLITICAL PROBLEMS ON US CAPACITY TO EXERCISE WORLD LEADERSHIP. FURTHERMORE, HE IS CONVINCED THAT THE SOVIETS WILL EXPLOIT THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT FOR THEIR OWN PURPOSES AND THAT HANOI WILL USE OUR PREOCCUPATION WITH THE MIDDLE EAST TO PUT GREATER PRESSURE ON SOUTH VIETNAM AND CAMBODIA.

15. DESPITE THESE ANXIETIES, LEE STILL APPEARS TO BE FRIENDLY AND WELL DISPOSED TOWARD US. HOWEVER, GIVEN HIS PAST BEHAVIOR DURING TIMES OF CRISIS WE SHOULD RECOGNIZE THAT HE CAN ACT UNPREDICTABLY AND PRECIPITOUSLY IF HE FEELS THAT SINGAPORE (OR HIS OWN POLITICAL POSITION) IS THREATENED BY EXTERNAL EVENTS AND THAT A POLICY TURNABOUT IS IN GOS INTERESTS. SUCH A REACTION COULD INCLUDE SOME PUNGENT CRITICISM OF THE US. WE THINK THAT THIS WOULD ONLY HAPPEN IF THE OIL CRISIS

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WERE TO WORSEN SERIOUSLY AND/OR THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM DISINTEGRATED. IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, IF LEE CONCLUDED THAT THE US WAS NOT CAPABLE OF DEALING WITH THESE CRISES, HE MIGHT EMBARK ON A COURSE DESIGNED TO CURRY FAVOR WITH THE MORE RADICAL NON-ALIGNED COUNTRIES AND ESPECIALLY THE ARAB GOVERNMENTS. SINGAPORE'S POTENTIAL FOR REVERSALS OF POLICY WAS RECENTLY DEMONSTRATED IN KHMER REPRESENTATION ISSUE AT THE UN (ALTHOUGH IT HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH OIL). DESPITE ASEAN SOLIDARITY ON BEHALF OF LON NOL GOVERNMENT, SINGAPORE WAS CLEARLY SHAKIEST OF SEA GOVERNMENTS IN ITS SUPPORT OF GKR AND WAS OBVIOUSLY FEARFUL OF BEING ON LOSING SIDE.

16. WE BELIEVE BEST WAY OF REDUCING POSSIBILITY OF ABRUPT

GOS ACTIONS WHICH COULD BE DETRIMENTAL TO OUR INTERESTS  
IS FOR US TO TAKE LEE MORE INTO OUR CONFIDENCE CON-  
CERNING OUR GENERAL STRATEGY IN MIDDLE EAST INDICATING  
TO EXTENT LATEST ASSESSMENT OF SITUATION PERMITS, OUR  
CONFIDENCE THAT OIL SHORTAGE WILL BE RELIEVED. WE  
SHOULD ALSO PROVIDE HIM WITH FRESH ASSESSMENT AND  
PERSPECTIVE ON INDO-CHINA SITUATION REITERATING OUR  
DETERMINATION TO CONTINUE MATERIAL SUPPORT TO GVN AND  
GKR TO MAXIMUM EXTENT POSSIBLE. WE SHOULD ALSO  
USE OCCASION TO EXPRESS (A) MEASURE OF UNDERSTANDING  
(IF NOT TOTAL SYMPATHY) FOR GOS ACTIONS TO DATE RELATED  
TO OIL RESTRICTIONS, (B) APPRECIATION FOR GOS ACQUIES-  
CENCE IN ARRANGEMENTS TO REFUEL WARSHIPS FROM  
BRITISH BUNKERS AT SEMBAWANG, AND (C) OUR HOPE THAT GOS  
WILL FIND WAYS TO HELP MINIMIZE IMPACT OF OIL EMBARGO  
ON OUR COMMON SECURITY INTERESTS IN THE REGION --  
PARTICULARLY TO ASSIST IF POSSIBLE IN RELIEVING THE  
OIL SHORTAGE IN VIETNAM AND CAMBODIA.

17. LEE HAS PROFOUND PERSONAL ADMIRATION FOR SECRETARY  
AND LETTER FROM HIM EXPRESSING ABOVE POINTS WOULD  
PROBABLY PLAY UP TO HIS EGO AND PROVIDE PSYCHO-  
LOGICAL REASSURANCE WHICH WOULD STEADY HIM THROUGH THIS  
DIFFICULT PERIOD. ALTERNATIVELY, REQUEST DEPARTMENT  
PROVIDE ME WITH INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE WHICH I CAN  
USE TO CONVEY POINTS SET FORTH ABOVE. IDEALLY I SHOULD  
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REPEAT THIS EXERCISE AT 4 TO 6 WEEKS INTERVALS EITHER  
WITH LEE OR RAJARATNAM SO THAT THEY CAN BE KEPT  
ABREAST OF DEVELOPMENTS.

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